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NORTHBROOK -- Don't ask Milton Greenfield about heroism.

The 89-year-old Army veteran just received a Distinguished Service Medal and eight other awards for his service during World War II, but the Northbrook resident doesn't understand what all the fuss is about.

"I hate to talk about it," he said last week. "I don't necessarily believe in this heroic stuff. I think it is instinct that makes you do anything that is brave, you know? Your instinct tells you this has to be done without thinking and you just do it. I don't feel like a hero."

The Army respectfully disagrees, although it took about 60 years to give Greenfield his medals.

And until recently, Greenfield never bothered to ask for them.

Greenfield, who was a tank commander, reluctantly described what he did to earn the medal: He pulled two men out of a burning tank. He also carried a wounded man under fire about 175 yards through the snow. Greenfield, who was wounded during the war and spent five months in the hospital, never spoke much about his wartime experiences.

He returned home and got into the candy business, eventually opening Five Star Distributors. He and his wife of 62 years raised four children. Greenfield sold his business more than two decades ago and now plays golf and volunteers at Rush North Shore Medical Center in Skokie.

But on a trip to the World War II memorial in Washington last summer, two of Greenfield's children and a grandchild met U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and told him about the missing medals.

Last month, Greenfield received his medals. The Distinguished Service Medal is "very pretty," he said. "It's red and white with gold. The medallion is gold itself. [Kirk] pinned it on me and I took it off right away. I can't walk around with a medal."